



Volunteers get busy pulling ragwort on
Coombe Bissett Down nature reserve



Photo: Sarah Marshall WWT

Volunteers breath life into chalk grasslands

Salisbury Wildlife Project volunteers had a busy 2008, with a number of extra conservation activities laid on in summer and autumn. Tasks were varied and included hay raking, river restoration and coppicing. “The turn out for these events was excellent, and all the extra manpower meant that we were able to do and achieve much more than we would have with our regular

Fishy project wins prize

Volunteers involved in the river work at the fish pass in Hurdcott may like to know that the project came second in the amateur category of the Wild Trout Trust Conservation Awards, held at the Savile Club, Bond Street, London. Nicky Warden says: “The award recognises all the hard work our volunteers put in. Well done and congratulations to all involved.”

programme of activities,” says Nicky Warden, the project officer. “I would like to say a big ‘thank you’ to everyone who took part.” One of the tasks volunteers were involved in was ragwort pulling on Coombe Bissett Down as part of the Trust’s ‘New Life for Chalk Grasslands’ project.

The three-year project, launched in July and funded by Grantscape and Biffaward, aims to conserve and restore chalk grasslands. This habitat is of international importance – 80% of the world’s total is found in the UK, of which half is in Wiltshire. It is also one of the most diverse, able to support 60 different species in any single square metre, many of which cannot survive elsewhere.

“Grazing will help keep down brambles, hawthorns, ash seedling and coarse grasses which if left unattended would shade out

the wildflowers these habitats are renowned for,” says Sarah Marshall, project officer.

“Ragwort is toxic to livestock which is why it is important to clear as much as possible from areas that are grazed. Each plant can produce thousands of seeds causing the population to spread prolifically if it is not controlled.”

“A livestock base is being set up at Coombe Bissett Down to supply Dexter cattle and native breed sheep. In the long term the animals will also provide high quality meat for sale through local suppliers and meat box schemes.”

“Project staff would like to say a big ‘thank you’ to all the volunteers involved,” adds Sarah. There will be more ragwort pulling events for the chalk grassland project in 2009 – see the next issue of *Kingfisher* for details.



About the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust



Our vision is of a sustainable future for wildlife and people. We have over 20,000 members, look after 38 nature reserves and have over 1,000 volunteers. We work with local communities, schools, businesses and public bodies to achieve our aims. Please join us.

Please enrol me/us as member/s of Wiltshire Wildlife Trust.

I/we would like to join as:

Single..... (£ 24)

Joint..... (£ 30)

Family..... (£ 36)

Name(s)

Address

Postcode

Telephone

I/we enclose a cheque for £ payable to Wiltshire Wildlife Trust.

Please return to:

Wiltshire Wildlife Trust
Elm Tree Court, Long Street
Devizes, Wiltshire, SN10 1NJ

Tel: (01380) 725670

Fax: (01380) 729017

email: info@wiltshirewildlife.org

www.wiltshirewildlife.org

Registered Charity 266202

Winter/Spring 2009 Conservation Tasks

The events listed below take place on the second Sunday of every month, from 10am – 4pm (except Easter Sunday).

***February 8th: Control of invasive scrub at Landford Bog**

Help with clearance of encroaching birch and gorse from the lowland bog – an internationally rare habitat.

Transport is available, however if you would like to make your own way there and need directions, contact Nicky.

March 8th: Coppicing at Frenchmoor Copse

Help us to create habitats for pearl bordered fritillaries.

Meet at SU279285 (parking on hard track within woodland). For directions, please contact Nicky.

NO DOGS at this site please.

***April 5th: Footpath improvements at Langford Lakes Nature Reserve (note: first Sunday of the month)**

Come and help us improve access for visitors to this important wetland nature reserve.

Meet in the car park, grid ref SU037370. Transport is available, however if you would like to make your own way there and need directions, contact Nicky.

***May 10th: Path clearance at Little Durnford**

Come and help us keep the paths and rides open at this beautiful nature reserve.

Wear long sleeved tops and long trousers with sturdy outdoor footwear.

Transport is available, however if you would like to make your own way there and need directions, contact Nicky.

First Thursday morning of every month at Avon Valley Nature Reserve, 10am–1pm. Jan 8, Feb 5, Mar 5, Apr 2, May 7

We undertake various tasks from boardwalk repairs to river restoration projects on Salisbury's very own Avon Valley Local Nature Reserve.

Meet at footbridge over the River Avon by Salisbury Leisure Centre, grid ref SU140310.

For more information, contact Nicky.

'Coppicing for Butterflies' event:

Tuesday February 10th: Coppicing at Holbury Wood, 10am – 4pm

Help us to create habitats for pearl bordered fritillaries.

For meeting point and directions please contact Dr Kate Dent on (02380) 383455, 07918 767635 or email kdent@butterfly-conservation.org.

To book or for more information on the event, contact Nicky.

Important information for volunteers...

BOOKING A PLACE: It is helpful if you book in advance by calling Nicky Warden on (01722) 792015.

TRANSPORT: Transport by minibus IS available for tasks marked *. Pick-up is from outside the store next to the footbridge over the River Avon by Salisbury Leisure Centre, at grid ref SU140310 at 9.45am, or from outside Debenhams, Salisbury Market Square, at 10am. For other tasks, lifts and car sharing can be arranged. Please call Nicky Warden on (01722) 792015 for information or to book a place.

HEALTH: We recommend that you have an up-to-date tetanus vaccination.

WHAT TO BRING: All tools and training provided. Wear suitable outdoor clothing and footwear. Tea, coffee and biscuits provided but bring a packed lunch for all-day tasks.

The Salisbury Wildlife Project

If you would like to receive a copy of this newsletter on a regular basis, get involved with the Salisbury Wildlife Project or just find out more, please contact Nicky Warden.

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